



A New Government For Uganda

An Intelligence Assessment

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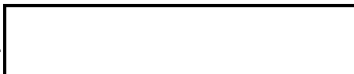
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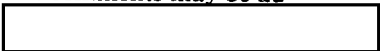


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An Intelligence Assessment

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A New Government For Uganda

Key Judgments

Now that the invading Tanzanian and anti-Amin Ugandan forces have established control over Kampala, installing and gaining recognition of a new Ugandan government will be their next order of business:

- The Ugandan National Liberation Front is the leading candidate for the role of successor government.
- The Front is a coalition of long-time rivals hastily put together last month under Tanzanian auspices. It has geographical balance, but little political cohesion.
- Formation of the Front dims the prospects of former Ugandan president Obote, long regarded as Tanzania's favored candidate to succeed Amin.
- Once it is in place in Uganda, a Liberation Front government will encounter deep-seated ethnic, religious, and political divisions as well as resentment from those who remained in Uganda throughout the Amin years.

The 2,000-man exile army did not give a very impressive account of itself in the war against Amin, but it may yet become an arbiter of power:

- Obote apparently has many supporters in the exile army and reportedly believes he can use this force to intimidate the Front's civilian leadership after the war is over. Ambitious commanders might, however, use the troops to wrest control for themselves.

Restoring the Ugandan economy to full productivity will be a two-to-three-year proposition at best:

- Agriculture—the principal sector—should revive readily but the economy's once well developed infrastructure is a shambles.

Tanzania will face some hard decisions about its future role in Uganda:

- Maintaining the military force currently in Uganda is a heavy economic drain, even if no effort is made to occupy the remaining two-thirds of the country.
- Prolonged support of a new regime in Uganda—basically a richer country than Tanzania—could cause discontent at home.

In foreign affairs, since Kenya controls the transit routes to Uganda its approval of a new regime will be crucial:

- Not only are its own relations with Tanzania strained, but Kenya also shares the apprehension of most African countries that Tanzania's intervention in Uganda may establish a dangerous precedent.
- The Soviet Union—the major military supplier of both Uganda and Tanzania—may emerge as a prime contender to assist the rebuilding of the Ugandan military forces.

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A New Government For Uganda

Now that the invading Tanzanian and anti-Amin Ugandan forces have established control over Kampala, installing and gaining recognition for a new Ugandan government will be their next order of business. Difficulties in getting the key Ugandan exile factions—long divided by tribal and personal differences—and their Tanzanian benefactors to agree on the composition of a provisional government may have been one of the reasons for the slow pace of the final Tanzanian push.

created a 10-member executive council to function as an interim government. A 30-member consultative council formed at the meeting is to serve as an interim legislature in Kampala until new national elections are held in two to three years. Relatively little attention was paid to formulating a political program.

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Ugandan National Liberation Front

The Ugandan National Liberation Front, a coalition of exiles put together late last month under Tanzanian auspices, is the leading candidate for the role of successor government. Its executive council has been functioning in Dar es Salaam, where it has issued a stream of press releases. By 6 April it reportedly had drawn up a list of cabinet members, sent a delegation to the UN to contact foreign diplomats, and appointed district commissioners for some of the "liberated" areas. Front leaders also claim to have the allegiance of the Ugandan exile military force that has accompanied the Tanzanian army on its march from the border.

The 67-year-old Lule, chosen to head the Front and its anticipated provisional government, has been living in London for several years. He was dismissed as head of the prestigious Makerere University in Kampala while Obote was still in power. Lule's selection was probably designed to confer respectability on the exiles' organization, and his political effectiveness and the depth of his support within the disparate exile movement are untested.

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In addition to Lule, the executive council is composed of five northerners and five southerners—an indication that greater effort went into solving the touchy problem of achieving geographic balance than into seeking ideological cohesion. Lule and two others are from the Baganda group, the once dominant tribe located in the Kampala area of southern Uganda. Three of the northerners are from the previously highly politicized Acholi tribe. The members of the council are drawn from the professions and from business; several are former cabinet members and diplomats; their political views range from radical Marxist to conservative. The list conveys an aura of dignity and consensus, but opens the question of whether the council members will be able to govern Uganda under conditions almost certain to be difficult, or even to work together for any length of time. The neat package that emerged from the Moshi meeting obscures deep cleavages within the coalition and serious frustrations among the factions that were excluded. In the event that the Liberation Front proves unable quickly to gain control of a post-Amin Uganda, Obote's supporters or the exile armed forces might yet make a bid for power.

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The Liberation Front is a coalition of long-time rivals that appears to stress tribal balance more than political consistency. It was created at a hastily arranged weekend meeting held in Moshi, Tanzania, late last month to which representatives of the major Ugandan exile groups in Africa, Europe, and the United States were invited by Tanzania. Approximately 120 delegates were accredited, with each group allocated four voting members and two observers. As word of the meeting spread, a number of new groups were formed just in time to qualify. A last-minute effort by followers of former Ugandan President Milton Obote to pack the meeting failed.

In addition to establishing the Front, the delegates to the Moshi meeting named Yusuf Lule—a widely respected former educator—as its president and

The Obote Issue

Former President Obote was the principal victim of the Moshi operation. A resident of Dar es Salaam since he was overthrown by Amin in 1971, Obote had long been assumed to be Nyerere's choice to head a successor government in Uganda even though he is generally unpopular in his home country. He is a Lango, but he also had a political base among the Acholis. Since the Tanzania-Uganda war started, however, Nyerere has consistently denied that he was working to reinstate Obote, and last month he appeared finally to have decided that Obote was a liability. The origins of the Moshi meeting remain obscure enough to permit speculation that it was prepared by Nyerere as a way of gathering all the Ugandan exiles into one anti-Amin movement. Obote, however, [redacted] refused to attend. His supporters secured the post of vice chairman of the Liberation Front for one of their number, plus two other seats on the Council. [redacted]

Obote reportedly still feels that he retains a stronger network of supporters than any other single presidential contender and that there will be further rounds of political sparring before the succession to Amin is established. He probably can count on some backing from the Acholi and Langi, two of the groups that suffered most under Amin and that are well represented in the exile military force. He might anticipate that Nyerere will eventually turn to him again, especially if the alternative is a power vacuum in Uganda. [redacted]

[redacted] serious disagreement had developed between Lule and Nyerere over the proposed new cabinet. Nyerere reportedly insisted that some Obote supporters should be included, and, in particular, that internal security, foreign affairs, and defense should be assigned to exiles well-disposed to Tanzania. Lule is resisting what he feels is Nyerere's attempt to dictate the composition of the post-Amin government. [redacted]

The Exiles' Armed Forces

The Tanzanian army still controls, arms, and supplies the Front's military forces and will be encouraged to stay long enough to dampen down political rivalries. Although the exiles' armed forces have not given a very impressive account of themselves in the war against Amin, they are a relatively cohesive group that may yet become an arbiter of power. [redacted]

While we have no accurate breakdown, about half of the 2,000-man exile army is probably composed of Obote supporters. Moreover, the deputy commander of this army and the chairman of the Front's military committee are both close to Obote. Working with these assets, [redacted]

Political Apathy

While the Tanzanians are easily capable of installing the Liberation Front as an interim arrangement, they may find eliciting permanent Ugandan support for it extremely difficult. The passivity of the Ugandan population throughout the war may give the returnees and their Tanzanian backers a misleading impression that it will not be difficult to establish a workable government. Many Ugandans bear long-standing ethnic, religious, or political grudges against the new rulers, and those who endured the Amin years in Uganda are unlikely to welcome those who did not, especially if—as can be expected—large numbers of former exiles attempt to claim choice jobs in the bureaucracy. [redacted]

There are no signs of political leadership emerging from within Uganda. While there were recurrent reports of anti-Amin plotting in recent years—and several unsuccessful attempts on his life—these incidents were almost exclusively instigated by dissidents within Amin's military forces. The “popular uprising” so much anticipated by exile spokesmen

never materialized; the population, generally apathetic politically, for the most part simply moved away from areas of active conflict. Normal political activity had all but ceased during Obote's regime after it had imposed a tightly controlled one-party system. []

Amin ruled with the backing of armed men from his own small Kakwa tribe and other remote northern Muslim groups who did not get deeply involved in policymaking or statecraft. Amin's government was largely a one-man show that functioned without much guidance from his ministers and gradually declined in efficiency. With the disintegration of the old army, many of the troops will probably head back to their northern homelands. As long as they retain their weapons, these soldiers will be a threat to the security and property of the residents of the areas they traverse. There may also be some localized settling of old scores. []

On the whole, the country can probably manage reasonably well in the temporary absence of a central government. With 40-some ethnic groups—most with deeply engrained political and economic systems of their own—and with identification by religion taken almost as seriously as by language, Ugandan society is highly fragmented. Moreover, the dividing line between Bantu and non-Bantu—the basic division of African peoples—areas of settlement runs across the middle of Uganda, producing marked differences between the northern and southern parts of the country. As a result of these fissions there is a strong emphasis on local self-reliance. []

The importance attached to local affairs may become a significant factor in the rebuilding of Uganda's political structure. While the provisional government is likely to focus on the central bureaucracy and the military, the appointments of the regional administrators may be more important in the long run. There are already indications of concern that ambitious regional commissioners assigned to their native areas—notably Paulo Muwanga in South Buganda and Yowari Museveni in Southern—may be creating personal followings in the newly "liberated" parts of southwestern Uganda. The Liberation Front's prompt dispatch of additional district commissioners to these areas shows its awareness of the political threat involved. []

Rebuilding Other Sectors

Restoring basic services and bringing the economy to full productivity will be a two-to-three-year proposition at best. Agriculture—the principal sector—benefits from excellent soil and weather conditions and can probably rebound fairly quickly. Subsistence farming survived the Amin years with little loss, and some formerly profitable commercial farms were returned to food production. However, there has been some decline in the acreage devoted to the most important export crop—coffee—and the lead time for bringing new trees into production is five years. []

After prolonged neglect, Uganda's once well-developed infrastructure is a shambles. Financial reserves are depleted, transportation facilities require substantial investment and technical input, and the personnel who once filled key positions have dispersed. []

It is unlikely that much has survived of Amin's regular military forces. Many soldiers appear to have returned to their homelands, taking their personal weapons and their vehicles with them. Many of the major items in the military inventory probably did not survive the war in usable condition. Rebuilding the defense forces will probably receive high priority under the new government, with attendant requests for foreign assistance. The Ugandans themselves will have to transform the exile forces into the nucleus of a new army and then attack the more difficult task of recruiting men and officers. They will also have to dilute the traditional northern dominance of the military if they are to decrease the chances of another coup. []

Tanzania will face some hard decisions about its future role in the administration and reconstruction of Uganda. It is sustaining a heavy economic drain just to support the 30,000 troops it has in the country now, and occupation of the remaining two-thirds of Uganda—should that appear necessary to keep the new government in power—would be an even more costly option. Tanzania probably anticipates that other donors will pick up the costs of launching the new regime and rebuilding Uganda's civil and military institutions. If, however, it finds itself locked into prolonged support to Uganda—basically a richer country than Tanzania—it could face mounting discontent at home over this foreign adventure. []

Foreign Relations of a New Regime

Dar es Salaam will probably attempt to ensure that a new regime placed in Kampala through its own military efforts will be compatible with Tanzanian interests. If the Liberation Front group hangs on to power, it may veer off into domestic policies not modeled on those of Tanzania. It may be slower to develop a clearly defined foreign policy of its own and may echo Tanzanian views in international forums for some time. [REDACTED]

Kenya's approval of a new regime could be most crucial, since it controls the transit routes to landlocked Uganda and is the leading moderate state in East Africa. Kenya's own relations with Tanzania have long been strained—the border between the two countries has been closed since early 1977—but Nyerere has tried to reassure Kenya at each step of his Ugandan campaign. [REDACTED]

Nairobi had no enthusiasm for the former Obote government, in part because it considered it dangerously socialistic and pro-Tanzanian. During the Amin era, Kenya had its troubles with the erratic Ugandan leader and at times did some sabre-rattling, but over the last few years it has maintained fairly good relations with Uganda and the extensive business contacts between the two countries continued. Ugandan refugees were allowed to settle in Kenya, but were prohibited from engaging in political activity there. Since the fighting broke out between Tanzania and Uganda, Kenya has remained scrupulously neutral—providing normal trade and transportation facilities to Uganda and resisting Nyerere's efforts to sway its views. Nairobi did draw the line, however, at facilitating Libyan military assistance to Amin. [REDACTED]

The bad feeling between Kenya and Tanzania is rooted as much in the differing styles of the two regimes as in practical matters. Kenyan leaders disapprove of Tanzania's socialism, which they feel does not work well even in Tanzania, and they are particularly irritated by Nyerere's moralizing and preaching. They almost certainly will point out the contradiction between his moral pronouncements and his scantily disguised ouster by military force of one regime in Uganda and the imposition of another. Nyerere's switch from

backing Obote—still intensely unpopular in Kenya—to supporting the front is not likely to be sufficient to reassure the Kenyans. [REDACTED]

The Organization of African Unity has created a mediation committee to try to resolve the dispute between Tanzania and Uganda. The effort has been stalled, however, by Tanzania's refusal to negotiate unless the OAU first censures Uganda for its incursion into Tanzania in October and Nyerere's disparaging remarks about the organization itself. In practical terms, the OAU is unlikely to take further action before its next summit meeting in July, if at all, even though Nyerere's actions have weakened its two fundamental principles—that no African country has a right to interfere in the internal affairs of another and that existing borders are to be respected. A few African countries have expressed support for the Tanzanian venture, but the vast majority, sensing their own fragility, are apprehensive that it might establish a dangerous precedent. [REDACTED]

With the end of Amin's regime, a shift in Uganda's relations with the non-African world is almost inevitable. The heavy emphasis on contacts with the Arabs—notably Libya—is likely to vanish when Amin's Muslim-dominated regime is replaced by a Christian government. Western states that have condemned Amin's record on human rights or been the object of his wrath are likely to be solicited for an early renewal of friendly relations and economic aid—even at the risk of irritating African states that feel special consideration should be given to African views. [REDACTED]

One looming question will be the role of the Soviet Union. It was the major military supplier of both Uganda and Tanzania prior to the war, and it stood aside during the conflict. The equipment destroyed was mainly of Soviet origin; more Soviet equipment is the logical replacement. Since its ties with Tanzania are well established and it presumably has some residual influence in the Uganda military, the USSR may emerge as a prime contender for a leading role in rebuilding the military forces of a new pro-Tanzanian regime in Uganda. If Nyerere retains influence in Kampala, however, he will probably try—as he has done at home—to forestall the Soviets' military role from spreading into the political arena. [REDACTED]

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